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International Dateline — International Library Organizations — To Join Or Not To Join

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One decision to make when entering the world of professional organizations is to decide which ones are right for your future. Although we would all like to belong to many organizations, membership costs, as well, a lack of time will certainly limit most professionals to only a small bushel of professional relationships. An option which many librarians overlook is international library organizations. The two most prominent of these organizations are the **International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)** and the **International Council on Archives (ICA)**.

A professional organization is commonly defined as a non-profit membership organization which serves the interests of members who share a common field of activity.¹ In 1994, there were 22,000 national non-profit associations in the United States.² Indeed, seven out of ten Americans belong to one association and one out of four belongs to four or more.³

The question is: why, with all of the organizations here in the states, would any librarian bother joining an international library organization? A simplistic answer is: because there's more to this world than what's in your own backyard or shelf range as the case may be. A more in-depth answer is that the reasons for joining an international organization are the same as for joining a city, state or national association. These reasons include: to expand personal knowledge and skills, to network with peers and to keep abreast of advancements in the field.⁴ Of these, I believe, the most important reason for joining an international library organization is that it facilitates a forum for new information. Whereas the main benefit of city, state and national associations may be the contacts they engender, the boon of international organizations is the opportunity to learn about interesting and important events in the outside world. For example, news such as: what effects the new Euro dollar might have on the pricing of books, in which war-torn countries is the **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** trying to preserve vital records, and how the UN's fight for women's rights in the world is progressing. Non-international library associations can easily overlook these events, whereas international library organizations keep you abreast of the world's events as they occur.

The first step in reviewing international library organizations is to decide which association will most benefit you and your future. Unless you have a special interest in a particular country, joining one country's library association will probably be too specific. When first deciding to join an international organization, I recommend joining an association that encompasses the world in its scope. For possible membership in the field of librarianship, two gems that most prominently shine are: **IFLA** (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) and **ICA** (International Council on Archives).

IFLA is an independent organization created to provide librarians around the world with a forum for exchanging ideas, to promote international cooperation and to stimulate research and development in all fields of library activity.⁵ IFLA's stated objectives are: to represent librarianship in matters of international interest; to promote the continuing education of library personnel; to develop, maintain and promote guidelines for library services.⁶

Founded in Edinburgh, Scotland, on September 30, 1927, IFLA began as a small association of academic libraries and national library associations. The original intent of the organization was to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on the international level and enhance worldwide contacts.⁷ The initial membership of the organization was

based in the countries actively pursuing international interaction, mainly Europe and the United States. After World War II, membership soon began to come from all over the world. Today, IFLA is represented in 142 countries and has 1502 registered members. This membership is better comprehended when the specifics of the IFLA membership categories are explored. The three areas are: basic Membership, Sponsor, and Bodies with Consultative Status. Within the basic Membership category, there are 15 international organizations, 136 national association members, 1060 institutional members and 248 personal affiliates. In the area of Sponsors, there are 13 Patron Sponsors, 4 Sustaining Sponsors, and 11 Basic Sponsors. Interestingly enough, the list of IFLA's sponsor's contains many international corporations, including **K.G. Saur, Lange & Springer Scientific Booksellers, SilverPlatter Information Ltd., B.H. Blackwell, Apple Computers, Inc., H.W. Wilson Foundation, 3M Library Systems Department, Elsevier Science BV, EBSCO Subscriptions Services** and many others. Within the Bodies with Consultative Status membership area, there are 15 members.

The basic organization of IFLA consists of the Council, Executive Board, and Professional Board. There are also 32 subject Sections, 12 Roundtables (grouped in 8 Divisions) and 4 Core Programmes. The Council is the members' general meeting forum and thus is IFLA's prime agent of organization. The Council meetings allow members to nominate candidates for IFLA's Executive Board, join Sections, and elect the Standing Committee.⁸ The Executive Board consists of an elected president and seven elected members and conducts all of the policy matters for IFLA. The Professional Board is composed of the Chairperson from each of the eight Divisions and a Chairperson from the previous year's Board. It oversees all of the professional groups and the Core Programs.⁹

IFLA's headquarters are located in The Hague, The Netherlands, with Regional Offices in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Bangkok, Thailand; and Dakar, Senegal. IFLA's Core Programme Offices are located in Frankfurt, Germany; Boston Spa, England; Ottawa, Canada; and Paris, France. IFLA's Regional Office is located in Washington, D.C.; Leipzig, Germany; Caracas, Venezuela; Tokyo, Japan; and Canberra, Australia. Funding for IFLA is derived from membership fees and the support of its many member international organizations.

As with most organizations, IFLA sponsors annual conferences to allow its members to meet, exchange ideas and participate in presentations. Just as IFLA's coverage is worldwide, its conferences are likewise. The future conference sites are planned for Amsterdam, The Netherlands (1998), Bangkok, Thailand (1999) and Jerusalem, Israel (2000). Each IFLA conference has a distinctive theme; the 1998 Amsterdam theme will be: *On Crossroads of Information and Culture*. The Conferences are usually held in late Summer.

In the realm of information dissemination, IFLA leads the helm in the variety and depth of publications. Notes, updates and reports are produced each year from the annual conference. There are also a number of serialized IFLA publications, including IFLA Press Releases, the *IFLA Journal* and *IFLA Professional Reports*. Each IFLA division, section and Roundtable also produces an individual newsletter. The focus of the IFLA publications center on the issues of international librarianship, but are not solely limited to that topic. The publications include such topics as library guidelines, multilingual children's reading lists, directories to international art libraries and historical archives reports prepared for UNESCO.

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Joining IFLA is as simple as a mouse click and a signed check away. The IFLA homepage (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/home.htm>) contains a Membership section with access to a detailed membership form. There are two categories of membership in IFLA, voting members and non-voting members. The voting members categories are Association Member and Institutional Member. The non-voting members categories are Personal Affiliate and Institutional Affiliate. The Personal Affiliate is the category individuals apply for to become members. The cost for Personal Affiliate membership is 150 NLG (Dutch Guilders), or roughly US \$73.00. The membership form must be printed off the Internet and mailed back to IFLA in The Netherlands. Personal Affiliate membership allows members to partake in one IFLA Section free of charge and join other Sections at a cost of 100 NLG (roughly US \$49.00) each. Once you are a member, you can join a Roundtables.

The advantages of joining IFLA are numerous, especially as it is one of the oldest and largest international library organizations in existence. Beyond the forum for international discussions, research and development, members can actively participate in the work of the Sections and Roundtables. There is also the involvement in the five IFLA Core Programmes, including Advancement of Libraries in the Third World, Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC, and Preservation and Control. Clearly the most tangible advantage of being a member of IFLA is the Publications Programme. The amount of international information that IFLA produces and disseminates each year to its members is the distinct reason I believe that membership is warranted.

A second international library association, albeit more specific than IFLA, is the **International Council on Archives (IAC)**. The IAC is a non-governmental organization, acting internationally, which is concerned with archives and their role in: the conduct of public and private activities; the protection of individual rights; the advancement of human knowledge and culture.¹⁰

The ICA was founded on June 9, 1948, at a special meeting called by UNESCO. The ICA held its first international meeting in 1950, in Paris, France. ICA's fundamental aim is to promote the preservation, development and use of the world's archival heritage.¹¹ It brings together archivists across the world to share information, to strengthen the development of the archival profession, and to raise appreciation of the importance of archives.¹²

The ICA is based in Paris, France, at the **Coordinating Board for European Programme (ICA/EUR)**. The ICA also has ten regional branches throughout the world, including the **Asociación Latinoamericana de Archivos (ALA)**, the **Arab Regional Branch (ARB)**, and the **East Asian Regional Branch (EASTICA)**. There are over 1500 ICA members worldwide in 168 countries. The membership is divided between five categories: national archival institutions, professional associations, public and private regional and local archival institutions, individual members, and honorary members.

ICA hosts yearly Roundtable Conferences in international locales. The most recent Roundtable Conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in September 1997. The Edinburgh Conference was the 32nd Roundtable and had a record attendance, with delegates from over 65 countries. Future Roundtable Conferences are planned for Stockholm, Sweden (1998), and Budapest, Hungary (1999). The ICA conference for 2000, called Congress 2000, is planned to be held in Seville, Spain. The main theme will be **Archives of the Information Society in the New Millennium**. Included in this conference will be sessions on management and

use of electronic records, the development of archival science, the role of archives in the society of leisure, together with parallel sessions on archives and archives management, and standardization.¹³ The ICA Roundtable Conferences are usually held in the early Fall.

The ICA is a prolific publisher of international archivists information, including over 160 separate titles. ICA's publication list includes specific titles such as the two ICA professional journals, *Achivum* and *Janus*, and the massive *Guide to the Sources of the History of Nations*. ICA also produces a thorough list of more general publications, including manuals, specialized studies, proceedings of congresses and conferences, and periodicals of the regional branches. The ICA is also active in publishing studies as part of the UNESCO's RAMP series.¹⁴ As a whole, ICA's publications focus on archives and archivists' work on the international level, detailing individual countries' situations as well as trends and themes that affect the world of archives as a whole.

The ICA has many other areas of activity. It actively works with other international organizations, including UNESCO to develop emergency programmes for protecting archives in the event of war, and the International Standards Organisation (ISO) on standards that deal with books, information and archiving. Moreover, the ICA is working with the latest technologies — from guidelines for permanent electronic access to an active listserv, called **ICA-L**. This year is also the 50th anniversary for the ICA, so many celebratory events are planned, including at exhibition in Stockholm at the upcoming Roundtable conference.

Individual membership information can be found on ICA's Webpage (<http://www.archives.ca/ica>). A year's membership is US\$ 125.00, which is costly. The advantage of joining ICA is specifically for archivists. The main benefit for joining ICA, like IFLA, is the publication list. ICA members receive many of the ICA publications free of charge, including the conference proceedings and the ICA studies. Becoming a member also gives one the privilege of attending the international conferences, making worldwide archival contacts, and working within the organization itself.

Both IFLA and ICA offer librarians the opportunity to expand their professional horizons. Although there is the issue of member-

In 1994, there were 22,000 national non-profit associations in the U.S.

Endnotes

¹ John G. Maurer, ed., et al., *Encyclopedia of Business* (New York, NY: Gale Research), p.1197.

² U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, "National Nonprofit Associations--Number, by Type: 1980 to 1994" in *Statistical Abstract 1996* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), p. 775.

³ Maurer and Sheets, vii.

⁴ John G. Maurer, ed., et al., 1198.

⁵ IFLA, "International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions." <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/home.htm> (4 March 1998).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ IFLA, "Structure and Governance of IFLA." <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/III/members/category.htm> (5 March 1998).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ICA, "International Council on Archives: What is ICA?" <http://www.archives.ca/ica/english.html#committees> (4 March 1998).

¹¹ ICA, "International Council on Archives: What is the Aim of ICA?" <http://www.archives.ca/ica/english.htm#committees> (4 March 1998).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ICA, "Congress 2000" in "What's New in the International Council on Archives." November 1997. http://www.archives.ca/ica/news_1197.html#top (6 March 1998).

¹⁴ ICA, "ICA Publications" in "What's New in the International Council on Archives." November 1997. http://www.archives.ca/ica/news_1197.html#top (6 March 1998).